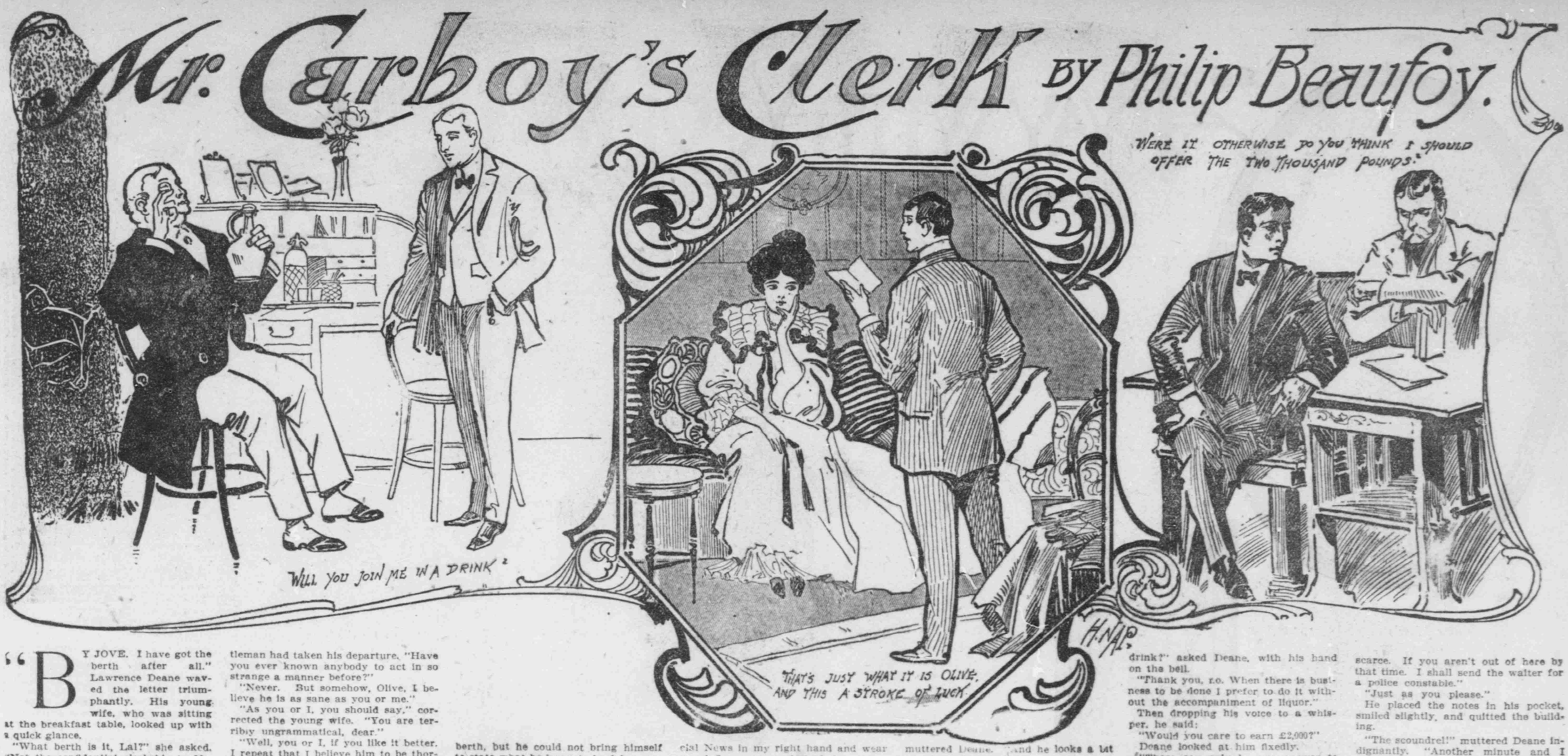
Mr. Carboy's Clerk BY Philip Beaufoy.



"BY JOVE. I have got the berth after all." Lawrence Deane waved the letter triumphantly. His young wife, who was sitting at the breakfast table, looked up with a quick glance.

"What berth is it, Lal?" she asked. "Not the confidential clerkship to Mr. Carboy, is it?"

"That's just what it is, Olive, and this a stroke of luck. Only fancy—two hundred and fifty a year to start with, and a big rise if I do well after the first year."

"It is glorious. And now, dear, you can buy yourself a new bicycle, and lots of other things."

On the following Monday morning Lawrence Deane journeyed to Fenchurch street, and was ushered into old Mr. Carboy's private office.

"Dear, dear, dear. You're rather late, Mr. Deane," grumbled the old gentleman. "Didn't I say you were to be here at nine?"

"It is only one minute past, sir."

"Only one minute, indeed! One minute a day makes six per week, or three hundred and twelve per year. Three hundred and twelve minutes constitute nearly five hours and a quarter, so that, assuming you were a minute late every day, you would be robbing me of over five hours labor per annum. It won't do, sir, it won't do."

Then, perceiving that the new clerk's face showed signs of unmistakable depression, he added quickly:

"There, there, we mustn't be too hard on you at first, and no doubt you will improve."

"I'll try," answered the young man, with a smile.

Mr. Carboy then introduced him to the other clerks, and he began his new duties with much satisfaction.

At 6 o'clock the employes rose to quit the office, but Lawrence lingered in order to make his desk tidy before going home. Mr. Carboy, who had entered the office unperceived, brought down his fist on the desk.

"Come, come, this won't do!" he snapped. "Don't you know, sir, that I expect every man to be on the way home by one minute past six?"

Then he added, in a milder tone:

"You see, Mr. Deane, I am a man who tries to be strictly just. I expect my people to be rigidly punctual in arriving at the office, but, to make the balance equal, I expect them to be just as punctual in leaving."

On the way home Lawrence smiled more than once at the recollection of his employer's eccentricity.

"I can't help liking the old chap," he pondered. "I believe he is as decent a fellow as one would find in London, in spite of his peculiarities."

Mrs. Deane met him at the door with a look of inquiry on her small, bird-like face.

"Well, old boy," she exclaimed, "what luck?"

"Oh, I fancy I shall do all right when I get a bit more used to the job," he replied, as he sat down to the tea table. "Old Carboy is a bit of a corker, though."

He then related to his wife the episodes which have been recorded previously, and the girl laughed heartily.

"Eccentric people are often the kindest, after all," she remarked. "And I feel sure I should like him."

Toward 10 o'clock that evening a tremendous summons sounded at the door, and Mrs. Deane went pale. A visitor at that hour was a very unusual occurrence, and she began to wonder whether any terrible incident had arisen.

Deane raced to the door and threw it open. Then he stepped backwards with a low cry of amazement, for standing on the threshold, with a fierce look in his eyes, was Mr. Carboy.

For one moment the clerk was too much overwhelmed with astonishment to utter a word, but at length he contrived to gasp out:

"Mr. Carboy. Whatever brings you here, sir?"

Carboy, without giving him an answer, walked coolly into the hall, and shut the door. Then, seizing his clerk's hand, he felt the young fellow's pulse and smiled.

"Excellent, admirable," he muttered. "Er—good evening!"

"This is very extraordinary behavior, sir. May I ask for an explanation?"

"Yes," chimed in Olive, who had arrived in the hall at that moment. "What does it mean?"

"You shall both of you know some day, but not yet," replied Mr. Carboy, with a slight laugh.

"He must certainly be insane," remarked Mrs. Deane, after the old gentleman had taken his departure. "Have you ever known anybody to act in so strange a manner before?"

"Never. But somehow, Olive, I believe he is as sane as you or me."

"As you or I, you should say," corrected the young wife. "You are terribly ungrammatical, dear."

"Well, you or I, if you like it better. I repeat that I believe him to be thoroughly right in his mind, but perhaps he has some curious purpose in his brain."

"But whatever can it be?"

"Ah, that is a mystery—a black mystery, as they say in the penny dreadfuls, which I cannot fathom."

On the following morning Lawrence Deane went to the office pondering over the events of the previous night. He sat down at his desk and began his work, but hardly had he commenced when a small office boy lounged toward him and tapped him on the arm.

"You're wanted in the governor's room," he said; "and at once."

"Very well."

The clerk put down his pen and walked swiftly in the direction of Mr. Carboy's private apartment. He tapped at the door and went in.

Mr. Carboy was seated at his table, with a bottle of Scotch whisky beside him. A couple of glasses stood on the tray, and he looked up smilingly when the clerk entered.

"Aha! Good-morning, Mr. Deane; good-morning. I have sent for you in order that I may apologize for my somewhat unconventional intrusion on your domestic circle last night."

"Don't mention it, sir," replied Deane politely.

"To prove that you have no resentment," went on his employer, "will you join me in a drink?"

He took up the bottle as he spoke.

Lawrence shook his head with firm decision.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said, "but, really, you must excuse me."

"Excuse you! What the deuce do you mean? Do you actually mean to tell me that you don't drink?"

"I certainly take a drink in moderation, sir, but not at this early hour. In fact, I rarely touch spirits till the evening."

"H'm! You seem a trifle straight-laced, I must say; but make an exception today and join me in a drink."

"With all respect to you, sir, I must decline," replied Deane. "I could not give proper attention to my work if I began tippling at 10 o'clock a. m."

Mr. Carboy held the bottle temptingly.

"Just a couple of drops," he urged. "Come, surely you cannot refuse?"

"I both can and do."

"Well, you are certainly the most obstinate young man I have ever met. However, if you won't drink, you won't, so there's an end of the matter. Er—you can go back to your work."

Lawrence obeyed, telling himself that Mr. Carboy's eccentricities were simply amazing, and throughout the remainder of the morning he wondered what the next outburst would be.

Nothing of importance occurred for a week. Then, on a certain foggy morning, Deane was summoned to his employer's room, and found the old gentleman exceedingly excited.

"Come, here's a pretty thing, Deane!" he yelled. "I told you to quote Heywood and Ropes the sum of ten-and-sixpence apiece for those Red Deep shares, and you actually quoted nine-and-six.

Deane shook his head.

"I beg your pardon," he said; "but you have made a mistake."

"A mistake, sir! Be careful how you talk. I never make mistakes."

"Then I can only say, sir, that you are more than human. I am willing to affirm, on oath, if need be, that you instructed me to quote nine-and-six. See, here is the memorandum which I made in my book at the time."

He produced the book as he spoke, and indicated the entry.

"Yes, yes, yes; that's all very well," snapped Mr. Carboy; "but how do you know you heard me aright?"

"I am positive I did, sir. The words nine and ten are utterly dissimilar in sound, and I could not possibly have mistaken one for the other."

Mr. Carboy glared furiously.

"Suppose I told you that if you refused to acknowledge your mistake, I should dismiss you from my service," he cried, "what then?"

"I should still adhere to my original statement."

"Oh, you would, would you?" snapped Mr. Carboy. "Very well, I'll take your word for it. Go to the cashier and get a month's salary, and then clear out."

Deane turned toward the door. It cut him to the heart to lose an excellent berth, but he could not bring himself to state what he knew to be false even to retain his situation.

His hand was on the door handle when the old man called him back.

"There, there!" he exclaimed. "Don't be so quick. I may have instructed you to quote nine-and-six, after all."

He held out his hand with such genuine friendliness that Deane smothered his resentment and grasped the old fellow's big paw with alacrity.

"Now go back to your work," cried Carboy, "and forget this incident altogether. It won't occur again, I promise you."

Three weeks passed. At the end of the third week a letter in an unknown hand lay upon Deane's breakfast table. He opened it and uttered a low cry of amazement.

"Come, this is mysterious," he muttered. "Wonder what on earth it can mean?"

The note ran thus:

London, Dec. 12, 189—.

"Sir—I happen to have discovered that you are in the employ of Mr. Roderick Carboy, of Fenchurch street, and, in view of that fact, it is just possible that I may be able to put you in the way of enriching your exchequer to a very huge extent. If you wish to discover the meaning of this meet me under the clock at Charing Cross on Saturday evening next at 8 o'clock. Do not mention this letter to any person at the office and destroy it when you have finished its perusal.

"I shall carry a copy of The Financial News in my right hand and wear a red flower in my butonhole.

"YOUR UNKNOWN FRIEND."

Deane passed the letter to his wife. She read it and then looked alarmed.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed. "This is a terrible mystery."

Deane smiled again.

"Perhaps it is nothing more than a stupid hoax," he said, slowly.

"But I think I shall pop down to Charing Cross on Saturday night and try to get to the bottom of it."

Saturday evening found our friend in a condition of unutterable excitement. He climbed on a bus and was deposited half an hour later at the terminus named by the writer of the anonymous letter.

The Continental mail had just snorted out of the station, and people were coming away from the departure platform after bidding adieu to their friends. Amid the confusion and bustle, Deane had some difficulty in forcing his way to the clock; but at length he arrived at that well-known trysting place and looked hastily around him.

"Hanged if I can see anybody with a red flower and the Financial News," he muttered. "It must be a hoax.

He was wrong, however, for at that moment a tall, foreign-looking man advanced toward him, and took up his position under the clock. In his right hand he carried a copy of the paper mentioned, and a crimson carnation gleamed from his buttonhole.

"By Jove! The 'unknown friend,'" muttered Deane, "and he looks a bit of a bounder, too."

He advanced, raised his hat slightly.

"I believe you are the writer of the letter addressed to me?" he said nervously.

The man bowed.

"Ah, you are Mr. Deane! Precisely! Now, where can we go and have a quiet talk?"

Deane indicated the refreshment room. The man shook his head and smiled.

"Too many people there," he muttered. "I want a private chat."

"My club is not far from here," suggested Deane. "And I dare say we shall find the card room empty at this hour when everybody is at dinner."

"The club be it, then."

They quitted the station and walked eastward until they arrived at a narrow street which led to the Embankment. Deane paused before a house, the basement gate of which bore the inscription, "Junior Strand Club." It was a small establishment, which for the sum of one guinea per annum provided excellent literature and vile cooking.

"Here we are," he said.

They entered the club, and Deane led the way to the tiny cardroom, and as he had anticipated, the apartment was empty at that hour, and his companion smiled as he sat down.

"This will do capitally," he murmured.

"Er—will you have something to drink?" asked Deane, with his hand on the bell.

"Thank you, no. When there is business to be done I prefer to do it without the accompaniment of liquor."

Then dropping his voice to a whisper, he said:

"Would you care to earn £2,000?"

Deane looked at him fixedly.

"There can only be one answer to that question," he replied. "When a man is earning a hundred or so a year, he does not willingly refuse two thousand."

"Precisely."

There was a pause, at the end of which the man said softly:

"Your firm is about to take up an option on Ranhuis Deeps."

"Great heavens! How did you know that?"

"That is my business. The £2,000 shall be yours this very evening if you give us the information specified on this paper."

He pushed toward him a slip of note paper as he spoke, and then leaned back in his chair.

Deane read the words and gasped.

"This is infamous!" he cried. "To give you the information asked for would involve a terrific breach of trust on my part."

"Of course. Were it otherwise, do you think I should offer the £2,000?"

He took out his pocketbook and extracted twenty notes, each for £100.

"See, there is the money."

A pause followed, during which he watched Deane with hard, gredy eyes.

"Well, what is your decision?"

The young man rose, pushed the notes across the table, and then taking out his watch, said quietly:

"My answer is this: That I decline your offer with disgust, and will give you sixty seconds to make yourself scarce. If you aren't out of here by that time, I shall send the waiter for a police constable."

"Just as you please."

He placed the notes in his pocket, smiled slightly, and quitted the building.

"The scoundrel!" muttered Deane indignantly. "Another minute and I should have thrashed him within an inch of his life."

Mrs. Deane was delighted when she heard the story of her young husband's behavior.

"And, after all, you know, the notes might have turned out to be false."

The next day was Sunday and he had plenty of time to contemplate the episodes of the previous night, but the contemplation brought him no shadow of regret. On the contrary, he rejoiced to think that he had acted rightly and had rejected the scandalous proposal with loathing and disgust.

On Monday he went to Fenchurch street as usual, but soon after his arrival at the office he was summoned to his employer's room. The old gentleman beamed upon him with extraordinary kindliness.

"Er—sit down, my boy," he observed. "I have something to say to you."

Deane took the chair indicated, and Mr. Carboy went on:

"I am going to improve your position," he said abruptly. "I am going to give you sole command of my branch in Piccadilly at a commencing salary of one thousand per annum."

Deane gasped. Was this another of old Carboy's eccentric jokes, he wondered.

"You may wonder," continued the old gentleman—"you may wonder why I have selected you for a position of the utmost confidence, and one which requires nerve, resolution, and all the other qualities which go to the making of a good fiancier. I have selected you, my boy, because I have weighed you in the balance and not found you wanting in anything."

"Weighed! Balance!" echoed the young man perplexedly. "I don't understand?"

"Doubtless you can't. Just take this piece of paper and read what I have written."

He handed him as he spoke a half-sheet of letter paper on which were written the following words:

"Qualities Requisite for Post in Piccadilly:

"1. Nerve.

"2. Sobriety.

"3. Adherence to principle.

"4. Incorruptibility."

"Now, listen!" cried Carboy. "Listen! I tested you for the first qualification—namely, 'nerve,' by coming to your house at an unearthly hour, taking you by surprise, and then feeling your pulse. It was perfectly normal, and that fact proved that you were a man who would not be easily upset by any unexpected shock."

He paused, smiled blandly, and then went on.

"I tested you for sobriety by begging you to drink whisky with me in this room. Again you stood the test, and stood it well. The third qualification—to wit, 'adherence to principle,' was amply demonstrated by your behavior in the matter of the Red Deep quotation, while the fourth and most important point was proved on Saturday evening——"

Deane gasped again.

"On Saturday evening!" he echoed wildly.

"Yes, look here!"

He rose, went to the cupboard, made a few swift movements, then faced round.

"Great heavens!" muttered the astonished young man. "The stranger under the clock!"

"Precisely. Your amazement proves that I played my part well, and so did you. The result of all this mummery is that I am going to give you a position such as any man of your age might envy, and if I'm not very much mistaken, you'll do credit to it."

When Deane told his wife the wonderful story that evening, she cried for joy.

"But, oh, Lal!" she said. "Who could have imagined it? What author could have hit upon so strange a tale?"

Deane smiled.

"One author only," he replied. "And his name is The Truth."

THE SUITOR: A Good Story by Tom Masson

HE reached forward and took her hand in his. For a moment—it seemed to him only an instant of time, and yet it was just long enough to convey its own meaning—she allowed it to remain. Then she withdrew it.

He was a wise young man. If he had attempted to pursue even this infinitesimal advantage and to reach forward again doubtless he would have been rebuked in that queenly manner which upon occasion she could so easily command.

And so he was content to wait, and change the subject.

It is proper to state, however, that the new subject was more in line with his real train of thought than the old. They had, when he made his advance, been talking on the commonplace topic of the latest historical novel.

Now he turned slowly and looked her squarely in the eye.

"I'm going to marry you!" he said.

"Are you, indeed? When did you make up your mind to that?"

"Oh, some time ago. I mean it, you know."

"And lose a million?"

He turned again, abruptly.

"How did you know anything about that?" he asked.

"Your father told me."

"When?"

"Oh, some time ago. He called."

"Why, you must have known, then——"

"That you wanted to marry me? No, I didn't. All I knew was that you had spoken to your father about it. You know you might have changed your mind—afterward."

He smiled, grimly.

"What you mean," he said, "is this: that I thought it best to consult the governor first and find out where I stood with him before I found out where I stood with you."

"Yes."

He got up and took a turn around the room.

"Well, that wasn't exactly it," he continued. "You see, if I had had any doubt about marrying you, I wouldn't have done that. I would have gone for you first and let the rest go. I mean business, and I thought it ought to be done right. Besides, I said to myself:

"'If the old man turns me down, then my conscience is clear.'"

She apparently unheeded the last part of his remark.

"May I ask," she said, "what made you so sure of me?"

"I wasn't. But I was sure of myself. I knew the girl I wanted. That is everything in love."

"You seem to have gotten very wise all of a sudden."

He grasped the top of the tarnished gilt chair with both hands and leaned against it hard, as he looked into her eyes.

"I've knocked around some," he said. "Since I've left college I've run with the Newport crowd and the high people in town. I've had a lot of girls thrown my way, but I wouldn't give a white chip for the whole gang. I've seen them at their best and worst. They're all right—some of them. It's the life I don't fancy. I don't care for the pace."

It was her turn to smile.

"But there's nothing about me," she said, "that ought to specially recommend itself to you. Why, I even have to earn my own living."

"But your grandmother didn't, did she?"

"Why, no; I suppose not. She was a Puritan."

"Well, mine did. I've heard the governor tell the story. So, what's the difference? A few years of time, more or less, a generation or so."

She opened her eyes rather wide.

"You seem to have taken on such a sudden weight of accumulated philosophy," she said, "that I hardly recognize you. Where's Jack Wakefield, member of twenty clubs, the great polo player, the howling swell? That sort of fellow doesn't go with such depth as this."

"Can't a man do that sort of thing and still be a man?"

"Why, of course; but they don't go together as a rule——"

"Well, maybe you did that for me, or maybe the governor got me mad; I don't know which. He's lived so much by himself of late years that the old fellow is crabbed, I guess. But he did turn me down hard."

"What did he say?"

"I don't know that I can rehearse it all—it was some time ago. But the main point was that, if I married you, he'd disinherit me. My allowance would continue, but no more. He must have gone direct to you to make a sure thing of it, didn't he?"

She turned her head slowly, and looked far away out of the dingy window, beyond the street, past the whirl of the great town, into the unknown distance.

"Yes," she said, "several times. He doesn't want you to marry me. Not a bit."

"Well, it doesn't make any difference to me whether he does or not. I can go out and hustle for myself. Money isn't everything."

The boarding house bell rang—not an unusual occurrence. Outside there was the slow snorting of an automobile.

He drew nearer to her. Again he took her hand.

"Helen, dear," he said, "what's the answer?"

She brushed away a tear.

"I cannot marry you," she said. "You're too good for me."

He laughed a spontaneous, hearty laugh.

"That's a good joke," he said. "Too good for you. Ha! Look here! Let's be honest with each other. I've had slathers of money, and there's nothing in it. Why spoil the game just because of a paltry million? I tell you it's all right. I assure you I'll never mention the matter again. We can live."

She shook her head.

"I cannot marry you," she said.

"You don't love anyone else, do you?"

There was no answer.

"I know what it is," he said. "It's your pride. Never mind, I can wait. Of course, it's embarrassing for you. You don't care anything about the money, of course, but your conscience troubles you about my losing it—naturally. Well, never mind—I'll show you. But now, dear, can't you give me some little word of encouragement?"

A capless maid entered the musty drawing room, holding in her red fingers a card.

"For you, miss," said the maid.

"Very well, Martha. Ask him into the small reception room, as usual."

Then she held out the missive to him.

"I'm afraid," she said, "there is no hope for you. You see, I am going to marry this gentleman."

He took in the familiar name in one burning glance.

"The governor!" he exclaimed.

A Recipe for Keeping Cool

By CHARLES R. PAGE, M. D.

"IT is better to look at common customs and vices calmly without either laughing or weeping; since the former is a cruel pleasure, and the latter is an endless grief!"—Reign of the Stoics.

No use to cry over the fate of the unfortunate who die daily these hot spells from heat—and the heat stroke. They are beyond help and beyond need of sympathy; but we owe something to the living. While the writer in his single thickness of light drapery, and nourished during the heat of the day by blackberries and cantaloupe, and something more substantial before bedtime was feeling at the age of sixty-seven like running a footrace on the sunny side of the street, and clipping upstairs two steps at a time, we learn from the papers every day that numerous persons were dying of the heat and innumerable persons were suffering the tortures of the damned, and all this practically from want of a little knowledge and good sense in a matter of drapery and feeding during a torrid wave.

The law would not permit us to parade the streets with an exclusive dress of an umbrella and a pair of sandals, but the merest horse sense ought to indicate the thinnest suit obtainable and the lightest kind of diet for both old and young.

In the seclusion of the home one may strip to the buff and have instant safety and comfort. For the infant and young child this would always be good practice, and in many instances it would mean immunity from harm from otherwise fatal heat. And, oh! how the baby will laugh and kick out, free from its wretched wraps. The average mother, so comfortable in peek-a-boo waist, will smother her little babe with many folds of flannel, feed it eatly and often, and wonder why it cries and dies!

Every summer, year in and year out, the death rate of infants and young children in hot weather is a veritable "slaughter of the innocents." We note that from one-third to one-half of the deaths, week by week, are of children under five. In an entire torrid week it will reach nearly the latter figure under one year. And all for want of knowledge on the part of parents and attendants of the essential importance of keeping cool by the only possible means, namely, dressing or undressing and feeding according to the weather.

If this advice were universally applied deaths or even discomfort from heat would be very rare indeed, and the death rate among infants and young children would not rise with the mercury.

HOME, SWEET HOME!

Smith—Fine time we had at the club last night, eh?

Jones—You bet! Did you get home all right?

Smith—No. I was arrested before I got there, and spent the night in the police station.

Jones—Lucky dog! I reached home.—Ally Sloper.